



Reflecting on 2005 and Looking Ahead to 2006

Thank You Field Artillerymen

At the beginning of a new year, people around the world pause to reflect upon the past year and look to the year ahead. As I look back, I see the actions of dedicated, flexible and creative Field Artillery Soldiers and Marines executing many standard and nonstandard missions in 2005—and executing them very well. From humanitarian missions and natural disaster relief here at home to fighting in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) abroad, I thank all Field Artillery Soldiers and Marines for their talent, commitment and sacrifices in accomplishing these missions superbly.

In support of GWOT, many Field Artillery units must be proficient in fire support and maneuver tasks since they are being given their own areas of operations and must perform the full range of maneuver missions. Many of these FA task forces (TFs) include Navy, Air Force and (or) Special Forces personnel. Two excellent examples of maneuver-fires FA TFs with joint personnel in Iraq are TF 1-10 (1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery, 3rd Infantry Division) and TF Thunder (4-11 FA, 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team). In a complementary effort, combat training centers (CTCs) are training our maneuver-fires units for these dual missions via tough scenarios in complex environments.

The FA also has some impressive fire support officers (FSOs) down range making a difference, notably, at the company level. They've come up with innovative approaches to what they call "tactical-level information operations (IO)." They're developing tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) to gather and integrate IO and intelligence into their units' operations and contribute to their units' civil-military operations (CMO) and civil affairs (CA).

There is no finer example of an FA unit's setting the standard in accomplishing nonstandard missions than the 82nd Airborne Division Artillery's (Div Arty's) participation in relief efforts for

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The Div Arty Commander, Colonel Vic Petrenko, and his Redlegs rapidly deployed to Louis Armstrong International Airport in New Orleans, assessed the situation, took charge and then coordinated and executed relief efforts.

The 82nd Div Arty now is executing another nonstandard mission: transforming into the modular 82nd Division's fourth and the Army's newest airborne brigade combat team (ABCT).

During the past year, much of III Corps Artillery has trained diligently to convert its batteries into medium truck companies, recently deploying 13 of them to Iraq. For example, in November and December, 2-5 FA, 212th FA Brigade, completed 23 missions while traveling more than 51,000 miles and encountered improvised explosive devices (IEDs), mines, etc., in more than half of those missions.

C Battery, 1-147 FA, 147th FA Brigade, South Dakota ARNG, deployed to Iraq last October to serve as a military police unit. From providing security for a base and prison to training the Iraqi Police in Baghdad, C Battery has excelled.

Also, in Iraq this year, 3-13 FA, 214th FA Brigade, III Corps, first validated the precision guided multiple-launch rocket system (GMLRS) rocket in Iraq. These rockets were designed to greatly reduce collateral damage. When the GMLRS was used in Tal Afar in support of the 3rd Armor Cavalry Regiment (3rd ACR) on 9 and 10 September, the rockets destroyed the target with almost nonexistent damage to the surrounding buildings. The 3rd ACR Commander Colonel H. R. McMaster said, "GMLRS proved itself in combat in Tal Afar and provided the regiment a tremendous capability. It not only was able to hit enemy positions with a great deal of precision, but also was able to limit collateral damage."

All these missions demonstrate our branch's "Pentathlete" mindset—the US FA's excellent execution of any



nonstandard mission while providing timely and accurate fires.

And we have other examples of excellence in our branch. "Congratulations!" are in order for 2005 award winners: the Knox Active Component Best Battery, A/2-17 FA, 2nd Infantry Division; the Hamilton Best ARNG Battery, A/2-162 FA, 92nd Separate Infantry Brigade; and the Gruber Award for innovativeness, Sergeant First Class Craig A. Brown, Fire Support NCO, 1-319 AFAR, 82nd Division.

Also, 3-7 FA, 25th Infantry Division, was the first Army combat unit to win the Secretary of the Defense's Phoenix Trophy for Excellence in Maintenance (field-level weapons and equipment) since the award's inception in 1985. 3-7 FA won the awards while deployed for exercises and missions, including to Afghanistan for Operation Enduring Freedom.

And back at Fort Sill, we are working to support US FA efforts worldwide. In addition, the Chief of Air Defense Artillery (ADA) and I are developing a plan to consolidate the ADA and FA schools at Fort Sill, melding as many functions as feasible. As our plan develops, I will discuss it in future columns.

Very few times in our history has America asked as much of her servicemen and women as she does today. As I look ahead through 2006, I see FA Soldiers and Marines continuing to set the standard for excellence as they answer her call. It makes me *proud* to be Field Artillery.